

all tutors selected for him by his uncles or by either House of Parliament, and to rule according to his own will, by the advice and agency of those whom he chose as his ministers. His principal choice does credit to his judgment. Michael de la Pole was a Yorkshireman, who had many years before risen from the ranks of the gentry to those of the peerage, by his services to Edward the Third in the French wars. He was well over fifty years of age when, leaving the party of the Duke of Lancaster to which he had been attached, he became Richard's confidant. He was as much the superior of Piers Gaveston as his young master was the superior of Edward the Second. Of Robert Yere, Earl of Oxford, little is certain either for good or bad. In choosing him for a favourite, Richard did not raise him from obscurity, for his ancestors had been Earls of Oxford since the reign of Stephen ; it is perhaps a presumption against his wisdom as a counsellor that he was under twenty-five years of age. It is equally difficult to estimate the character of Tressilian, who as Chief Justice became Richard's instrument, and of Brembre, who headed the King's friends among the citizens of London. But besides these distinguished and perhaps honourable recipients of the royal favour, there appear to have been a number of more insignificant and needy gentlemen attached to the Court, favourites in the worst sense of the word, who, after making what they could out of a generous and foolish master, finally brought him to ruin.<sup>1</sup> There were many in England who would have welcomed a revival of absolutism if it had meant good government in the interest of the middle classes. In favour of such an administration, the House of Commons itself would have foregone its right of interference. But the King, even while he was still in the process of attaining power, showed that he cared for royal privilege more than for the interests of the nation. A spendthrift Court, fed on the national money, characterised the reign of Richard no less than of Charles the Second. This waste was from the outset a cause of quarrel between the Crown and the Commons.<sup>2</sup>

The affair began ominously in July 1382. The Chancellor appointed by the last Parliament was Lord Scrope, a man of

<sup>1</sup> See Ap,

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